

HOUSE RESOLUTION 258
By Brooks (Shelby)

A RESOLUTION to create a special study committee to examine issues pertaining to reparation proposals for African-Americans.

WHEREAS, between 1619 and 1865, approximately 4,000,000 Africans and their descendants were enslaved in the United States and the various territories that became the United States; and

WHEREAS, until 1865, the institution of slavery was constitutionally and statutorily sanctioned in this country; and

WHEREAS, slavery constituted an immoral and inhumane deprivation of life, liberty, citizenship rights and cultural heritage, and denied Africans the fruits of their own labor; and

WHEREAS, sufficient inquiry has yet to be undertaken with regard to the lingering effects of the institution of slavery upon living African-Americans and Tennessee society; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that a special study committee is created to:

(1) Review the institution of slavery as it existed from 1619 through 1865 within the United States and the various territories that became the United States; such review to include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following subjects:

(A) Capture and procurement of Africans;

(B) Transport of Africans to the United States and the various territories that became the United States for the purpose of enslavement, including their treatment during transport;

(C) Sale and acquisition of Africans as chattel property in interstate and intrastate commerce; and

(D) Treatment of African slaves in the colonies and the United States, including the deprivation of freedom, exploitation of labor and destruction of culture, language, religion and families.

(2) Identify and examine examples of systematic discrimination and violence against freed slaves and their descendants between emancipation and the present; such examination to include, but not necessarily be limited to, economic, political and social discrimination as well as the extent to which the governments of the United States and this state prevented, opposed or restricted efforts of freed African slaves to repatriate to their homeland.

(3) Identify and examine federal and state laws that discriminated against freed African slaves and their descendants between emancipation and the present.

(4) Identify and examine the lingering, pervasive effects of slavery and discrimination upon living African-Americans and upon Tennessee society.

(5) Examine issues pertaining to appropriate remedies; such examination to include, but not necessarily be limited to, analyses of the following issues:

(A) Whether the State of Tennessee should offer a formal apology for the perpetration of gross human rights violations on African slaves and their descendants;

(B) Whether any form of compensation to the descendants of African slaves is warranted; and

(C) If it is determined that compensation is warranted, the appropriate amount and form of compensation as well as eligibility criteria for receipt of such compensation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the special study committee shall be composed of five (5) members of the House of Representatives, each of whom shall be appointed and convened by the Speaker within the 120-day period following adoption of this resolution.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all members of the study committee shall be persons who are especially qualified to serve on the committee by virtue of education, training or experience, particularly in the field of African-American studies.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that at its first meeting, the study committee shall elect from its membership a chair and a vice chair.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that each member of the study committee shall be paid for attending committee meetings as provided in Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 3-1-106, and each member shall continue to serve as a member of the committee until the committee ceases to exist, provided the member continues to serve as a member of the house of representatives.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the committee may hold such hearings and conduct business at such times and at such places within Tennessee, and request the attendance and testimony of such witnesses and the production of such books, records, correspondence, memoranda, papers and documents, as the committee considers appropriate.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the committee is authorized to call upon any state department, agency or entity to supply such data, program reports, and other information, personnel and assistance as it deems necessary to discharge its responsibilities under this resolution and any such department, division and agency shall, to the extent possible and not inconsistent with any other law of this state, cooperate with the committee, and shall furnish it with such information, personnel and assistance as may be necessary or helpful to accomplish the purposes of this resolution.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the committee may procure the services of experts and consultants, subject to the availability of funding for such purpose.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that within one (1) year of its first meeting, the committee shall issue a final report of findings and recommendations to the House of Representatives, at which time the committee shall terminate and cease to exist.